

BULLETIN
OF
THE EVERETT HISTORICAL SOCIETY



(FOUNDED 1976)

Volume 7, Issue 2, September 1986

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MEETINGS

The Society meets in
September, November, March, and May
of each year.

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A WORD ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Theodore (Ted) Leggett was a long-time resident on Bolster Street, Everett, until this past year. Now he is a resident in nearby Melrose.

He attended the Everett Public Schools and graduated from Everett High School. He received a Bachelor of Business Administration from Northeastern University, where he attended the evening school while working in his youth at the old Boston American, now the Boston Herald.

Recently retired from the Boston Herald, he is now a free-lance writer. He also volunteers as a fitness counselor at the Cambridge Young Men's Christian Association. Other volunteer work includes visits to the Shriner's Burns Institute and Hospital for Crippled Children in Boston, where, as a Shriner, he hosts visitors from all sections of the country.

(Everett Historical Society note: During August of 1986 Theodore Leggett celebrated his eighty-fourth birthday. While many people this age cut back their activities, Ted Leggett is looking for new challenges and commitments. This Bulletin is one of his most recent accomplishments.)

OUR NEWFOUNDLAND HERITAGE

by

TED LEGGETT

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OUR NEWFOUNDLAND HERITAGE

At the turn of the century, economics over ruled the hearts of many young Newfoundland families. Armed with the expertise of carpentry and construction work, they looked towards the United States for better opportunities for work and education for their children.

Massachusetts became the goal of many. As a result, a goodly portion found residence in Chelsea and Everett. Today, you don't have to go too far in Everett to find people whose forbears came from their mother country.

The popular Newfoundland delicacy of "fish and brewis" is still found on the menu of church suppers at the Elm Street Baptist Church and, at intervals, the Glendale United Methodist Church.

I interviewed about two dozen Everett folks whose ancestors were born in Newfoundland. Some of our residents were born there.

I'm going to let my friends take my hand and guide me through the towns, hamlets, and coves of their ancestors. But first, I'd like to describe Newfoundland in its entirety, as related to me and through material kindly supplied by the Newfoundland Tourist Service Division.

NEWFOUNDLAND

"....You're going to always want to return!"

That seems to be the consensus of all who make periodic visits to their homeland.

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When you come to Newfoundland, you are asked to prepare for a new and totally different experience. There is apparently no place like this unique country.

It was the original New World, but, I am told, it has retained much of the Old World heritage.

Indeed, it's a world of its own, with a landscape that keeps changing mile by mile and weather that can be different hour by hour.

You can experience all the moods and contrasts in a single visit: The mysterious sea-mists that roll over the rocky headlands to the accompaniment of crashing breakers and moaning foghorns. The deep fiords and majestic mountain ranges. The shimmering lakes and the wild, lonely moors. The endless forests and the awesome rivers and falls. The rock, and the wildflowers, and the berries that you can't find anywhere else in North America.

Here, you can visit the places where Vikings lived a thousand years ago, and where Indians - Newfoundland's original inhabitants - lived and worked 3,000 years before that. And you'll spend time in villages that seemed to defy the logic of existence, clinging to rocky, sea-battered shores in secluded coves.

Our Everett folks tell me that in these places and in the inland towns or the two major cities, you'll find the real people of Newfoundland. They are friendly, hospitable, hard-working, fun-loving, God-fearing, kindly people - people like you've never met before.

Their voices reveal their ancestry of English, Irish, and Scottish adventurers, but their words are the wisdom of 500 years'

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survival and development of a unique life-style and culture.

Their faces are happy as they see their province's progress and future prospects, but their eyes show the courage and determination that made Newfoundland what it is.

You'll never forget these people and you'll never forget their land. It's an experience like falling in love.

THE THINGS YOU'LL REMEMBER

The first thing you'll notice about Newfoundland is the weather, especially the air. It seems clearer, lighter, and free from pollutants. When you take a deep breath, it's almost intoxicating.

If you arrive by ferry, you'll relish the tang of salt water in the air. And if you find yourself sleeping longer or even taking daytime naps, give the credit to the known medicinal effect of ocean climate.

This is a great sales pitch by our Newfoundland Tourists Division, but my Everett guides agree unanimously that it is a fact.

When the weather is fine, they say, the sky is brilliant blue with unfiltered sunlight. The varied hues of the landscape seem almost to be even bluer than the sky as the crystal-clear waters glisten in the sunlight.

Even bad weather has its own beauty in Newfoundland. It must be expected, because you're at North America's most easterly projection into the Atlantic Ocean. Remember you're closer to England than you are to Manitoba, and you're as close to Italy as you are to British Columbia when you're in Newfoundland.

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A cool ocean mist can be refreshing compared to the dead heat of an industrial city in midsummer. An overcast day transforms the landscape into a whole new world of colour that can delight the camera buff. And if you're lucky enough to experience a gale, don't pass up the opportunity to get to the coastline and watch the spectacle of thunderous seas pounding the rocky shores. Children especially will never forget such sights.

You will never forget the Newfoundland life style. It is rich in culture, colour, and humour. Here you will find the original "Newfie" jokes, not the transplanted ethnic quips that are common in every country. They are true Newfoundland anecdotes and hilarious one-liners that Newfoundlanders have refined for over a half a millennium. They have learned the novel art of laughter, and they'll share it with you.

And there's the music, we are told. Newfoundlanders sing, dance, and play more than anyone else and they do it better. Music is everywhere, and Newfoundland has a wealth of thousands of its own folk songs that is unequalled in North America. Listen to them, sing them, and take them home with you.

Water is everywhere. There are more lakes and rivers for every square mile than in any other comparable area in North America. You are almost never out of sight of water.

Obviously, it's a sportman's paradise. The hunting and fishing in Newfoundland is unsurpassed, and has attracted the world's most famous outdoorsmen.

Here are some features about Newfoundland that are worthy to note. You and your family can enjoy nature in comfort, because

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Newfoundland has no skunks, porcupines, snakes, poison ivy, or the pollen that brings on hay fever.

Now, let's get on with the places where a great number of Everett families had roots.

ST. JOHN'S

St. John's is one of North America's oldest cities and the provincial capital. It has, perhaps, the largest fishing harbor in the world.

My Dad, the late James J. Leggett, was born here and came to the States in the 1880's. He married my mother (Mabel A. Pentz) in South Boston, and they raised a family of 12 in Malden and then in Everett. My father was compositor on the Boston Globe until his death in 1931.

Old St. John's has been a sheltered haven for ships of many nations since the earliest use of the North Atlantic sea routes. As the North American city closest to Europe, it has played a historic role in the development of transatlantic travel and communication.

From the busy modern waterfront of the boot-shaped harbor bowl, the city climbs steep slopes and spills over the skyline crest. The Victorian architecture of the older downtown area gives way to the brighter, more spacious geometry of blossoming new suburbs, replete with modern schools, parks, playgrounds, churches, office buildings, and shipping areas. You'll find lots to see when you visit Old St. John's Shop for Newfoundland handicrafts, enjoy a game of golf or tennis, or watch seasonal spectator sports.

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Along the Eastern coast up and down from St. John's are also familiar coves and hamlets with names that bring memories to many Everett folks.

HARBOUR GRACE

Harbour Grace is one of the towns of Conception Bay. I was visiting the home of Henley and Laura Martin on Springvale Avenue, a short while before my friend Henley passed away early in June. Henley was born in Harbour Grace and was so very, very proud of his heritage.

Although much of its former glamour has departed, Harbour Grace is still rich in history and in pride of achievement. Its name is from the French, and it was called Havre de Grace possibly as early as 1505.

For a long time, Harbour Grace was known as the metropolis of Conception Bay and was the second town in Newfoundland, ranking in trade and population next to St. John's. It was the terminus of the first railway around the Bay. There were many wealthy business houses and flourishing seal and cod fisheries. The town was captured and looted by French troops in 1696. Part of John Guy's colony at Cupids had moved to Harbour Grace and to the neighboring roadstead of Bristol's Hope. Four miles north of Harbour Grace is Carbonear.

CARBONEAR

Margaret Peach of Everett told me that her late husband, Eric, had ties still living in Carbonear. As did John and Laura Rowe, formerly of Everett, and now living in Wakefield.

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However, let's give this space to Norman and Florence Stevens, now of Melrose but long-time residents of Everett. They recently returned from a visit to Newfoundland, and here is what Florence had to say:

"Newfoundland is such a beautiful country. It has such quaint places as Blow Me Down, Heart's Content, and Come by Chance.

"There is now a Trans Canada Highway that goes from Port Aux Basque to St. John's. Years ago, they only had roads, not major highways. While you were going through the towns, horses and cows were right on the road beside you.

"There are areas that are predominantly French. Most of the old churches have cemetaries right beside the churches.

"Most of the families that came to Boston about 100 years ago, became carpenters and worked for the Abathau Construction Company.

"My folks came from Carbonear and I have visited this quaint village about four times. The people are beautiful people and are very friendly. Years ago, education was not available for the poor here. My father came to the States when he was 14 and settled in nearby Chelsea.

"Years ago, we sent our clothes by boat from New York to Newfoundland. Our cousins tell us how they just waited for our clothing. That's how poor the folks were.

"However, now most Newfoundlanders are wealthy. I have a cousin who has a supermarket that would put our large supermarkets to shame. He also owns a furniture store and a clothing store. I mention this because of the drastic changes in Newfoundland's economy.

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"Needless to say, we enjoy the popular Newfoundland delicacy 'fish and brewis', every time we visit. My husband enjoys their seal meat - mighty strong."

OTHER TOWNS AND PLACES

The Mercer family, well known in Everett, had many antecedents from small places in Newfoundland. Fannie and her husband, Dale Jenkins, had folks in Bay Roberts, Grand Falls, and Stoup Cove.

The Walter Moores in the Woodlawn section of Everett had forbears in Conception Bay, along the Avalon Peninsula, St. John's, and Bay Ball.

The Strong family, Selina and Liza, also of Woodlawn, come from Old Perlican.

Charlie and Phyllis King now reside in Revere, but perhaps are better known in Everett because of their many associations at the United Glendale Methodist Church in Everett. Charlie is the tenor soloist there, and Phyllis is associated with many of the Church's societies. The Kings had forbears coming from the Western Coast of Newfoundland, from places such as Adam's Cove, Western Bay, Black Head, and Fortune Bay.

Lester and Marion Tuck of North Everett had folks who came from Hank's Harbour, Trinity Bay, Broadcove, and Fresh Water. Lester is Past Master at the Galilean Masonic Lodge of Everett which is now meeting in Saugus.

The Trickett family, Bertha and her daughter, Alice, who came from East Everett tell me their folks come from Spout Cove and Broadcove. Alice is Past President of the Women's Society at the Glendale United Methodist Church.

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The Thistle family of Everett report that Broadcove was also Thistle country in the olden days.

Mr. and Mrs. Everett Robbins tell me their folks came from Trinity Bay. Their daughter, Dawn, recently was ordained a minister in the Methodist Church and had parishes in St. Albans, Vermont this past year. Now she has moved on to larger churches in upper New York state.

CONCEPTION BAY

As most of the people mentioned had folks who settled in Conception Bay, let us give a brief description of this quaint area.

A brief motor drive from St. John's takes the visitor to several towns of Conception Bay. The bay itself was named by the Portugese discoverer, Gaspar Cortereal, who came in the year 1500 and claimed the island as part of Portugal's dominion under the famous "Linea Divisionis" which divided the new world between Portugal and Spain.

A first glimpse of the bay from the heights above the Topsail driveway shows Bell Island, Kelly's Island, and beyond these the far outlines of the North Shore in the blue distance. Kelly's Island received its name from a noted pirate who had a rendezvous there three centuries ago. In a lagoon on the east of the island may still be seen a large anchor imbedded in the beach where the bold Kelly careened his ships and refitted them for further piratical raids on transatlantic trade. Legend holds that somewhere on the island lies the fabulous hoard hidden by the fierce sea rover of other days.

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Hollyrood is at the end of the bay. The scenery is delightful. In the vicinity are several salmon and trout streams. Farther along the route are Harbour Main and Brigus, two of the oldest settlements in the province of Newfoundland. Harbour Main received its name from Saint Men of Brittany, who was a patron of fishermen from the port of St. Maio. Bogus is a form of Brickhouse, an old town of England. One still gets the impression here of a typical village and quaint, old-fashioned cottages and rugged towering elms.

Next we come to Cupids, the first official settlement in the island. Here in 1610 John Guy of Bristol located his colony under charter from King James the First of England. Guy brought out a company of thirty-nine and built his Sea Forest Plantation at the head of the small harbor then known as Cuper's Cove. The letters which Guy wrote home to the parent company have been preserved in Bristol, England, and they tell of the first winter spent in Newfoundland and give a description of the buildings erected under his personal supervision.

Farther along the west side Conception Bay, the thriving towns of Bay Roberts and Spaniards Bay greet the eye of the stranger. The former received its name from fishermen of Jersey who came out from the Channel Islands in the sixteenth century. The latter is a reminder that at one time Spain did a remunerative trade in the fishing industry in Newfoundland waters, an industry as far as Spanish fishermen were concerned ceased with the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588.

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TRINITY BAY

We learned from John and Reta Butt of Cedar Street, Everett, about Trinity, Trinity Bay and New Chelsea.

John's wife, Reta, was born in New Chelsea, Trinity Bay, in 1915. Her father, Caleb Button, was a fisherman there. Her mother, Ursula (Bailey), was also born in Newfoundland.

William John Butt was born in Chelsea, Massachusetts, but his father, William Henry Butt, and his mother, Johanna Cale Butt, came from Carbonear, Conception Bay.

William John's father, William Henry, was a builder and constructed the present home of the Butts on Cedar Street, Everett. In fact, five houses on Moody Avenue (off Cedar Street) were built by him. He was given permission to name the street as Butt Avenue, but thought it better that it be called Moody Avenue. This was the name of the former owner of the land from whom he purchased same.

Many folks in Everett will remember William John Butt, who before his retirement a few years ago was a Lieutenant on the Fire Department. Today he is quite active as President of the Board of Trustees at the Glendale United Methodist Church.

TOWNS OF THE NORTH

Many Everett families had ancestors who were born in the towns of the North in Newfoundland. Prominent among them are Trinity, Catalina, Bonavista, Fogo, Twillingate, and St. Anthony.

Trinity clings to the base of Ryder's Hill and is sheltered in one of the finest

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harbors in the world. Here in the year 1615 Sir Richard Whitbourne set up the first Court of Justice in North America. He was under orders from the British Admiralty to suppress crimes among the fishermen of European ships that came in hundreds to Newfoundland waters each summer.

Next in turn is Catalina, the harbor of St. Catherine. The harbor of Catalina today is perhaps best known by the Fishermen's Union situated in the western arm.

Four miles north of Cape Bonavista lies the town of that name. Bonavista is one of the oldest settlements in Newfoundland, and its founding goes back to the days of the first Fishing Admirals, when those bluff traders chose the best harbors and drove the resident fishermen into more remote and less sheltered coves.

Fogo town is north of Fogo Island. On the earliest maps the latter is spelled Fuego.

On the east of Fogo Island is the village of Tilting. The name is a changed form of Tilt Town, and undoubtedly the latter was so called from the primitive log huts of early Irish settlers.

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NEWFOUNDLAND FOLK MEDICINES

(Everett Historical Society note: The following is an interesting bit of folklore. Similar "remedies" were practiced in most ethnic cultures at one time or another. Sadly, none of the "remedies" worked. Some, as the reader deduced, were harmful and led to medical complications instead of cures.)

Many Everett families recall some of the folk medicines their ancestors swore by in the olden days. Here are some examples:

CURING WARTS. Cut notches in a stick and hide the latter. Rub a piece of fresh meat on the wart; then bury the meat and when it decays, the warts will disappear.

TOOTHACHE. Vinegar left in the mouth gave relief. Pebbles from the grave of a pious person provided a faith cure.

PAIN IN THE SIDE. Put a pebble under the tongue.

HEADACHE. Walk backwards, around in a circle preferably.

BOILS. Place poultice of soap, flour, and molasses on brown paper. To extract the core of the boil, put hot water in a bottle. Then empty the bottle and place the mouth of the bottle on the boil. As the bottle cools, the core will come out.

INGROWING NAILS. Drop hot tallow from a lighted candle into the part affected and instant relief is afforded.

RHEUMATISM. A great brown jellyfish was bottled and then dissolved into fluid. It was rubbed on the affected parts and acted as a counter irritant. One objection to

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this cure was the offensive odor. The magician came to the rescue with an amulet of haddock fin. When worn on the neck, it was a charm against rheumatic tendencies.

COUGHS. The most effective home remedies were extract of wild cherry and spirits of turpentine. Kerosene oil mixed with molasses proved effective. Snake root was also steeped for a cough medicine.